

# Deafness and Mental Health Statewide Consultation Service Newsletter

**Edition 2**

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Welcome to the latest edition of the Deafness and Mental Health Statewide Consultation Service newsletter. The Deafness and Mental Health Service is the only service of its kind in Australia and provides assistance by way of support, education, information and resources for service providers who work with Deaf and hearing impaired people.

## Deafness and Mental Health workshops offered

The Deafness and Mental Health team provide a variety of educational workshops for all health care professionals.

Workshops can range from one hour to a full day and provide information on:

- understanding the culture of Deaf people
- language and assessment issues
- hearing loss and the implications for mental health
- working with Sign Language interpreters.

The Statewide Deafness and Mental Health Service, Deaf Services Queensland and Wide Bay Integrated Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services hosted workshops last October, to raise awareness of the impact deafness and hearing loss can have on a person's mental health.

The workshops were designed to better equip local services to work with Deaf or hearing impaired people and sign language interpreters and was well attended

A special thank you goes to Cherie Wilkie (Deaf Services Queensland) and Cherie McGregor (Wide Bay Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Service - South) for all their hard work in promoting the workshops.



*Pictured from left: Di Briffa, Jennifer D'Ath, Cherie Wilkie and Cherie McGregor*

The next workshop for professionals working with Deaf and hearing impaired people will be held on **Thursday 12 June**.

This workshop will be held at the Macgregor Community Mental Health building, 519 Kessels Road, Macgregor.

To express your interest in this workshop or other professional development opportunities available through the Deafness and Mental Health Service, please contact [Deafness\\_MHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Deafness_MHS@health.qld.gov.au).

## Deaf Children Australia's SAFE Program

Queensland Health was one of the generous financial supporters who enabled Deaf Children Australia to adapt the UK SAFE Programme for the Australian context.



The great news is that the Deafness and Mental Health Service has now received some licences in order to provide access for Queensland Health staff members to use this innovative online program for Deaf children.

The SAFE Programme supports the personal safety skills training of children through a ground breaking web-based resource. Deaf children and young people need to be given the awareness to recognise abuse, the vocabulary to describe it and the knowledge of where to go for help.

Utilising animations, role-play, video clips and feeling cards, together with Auslan, spoken language and captioning, SAFE is a safety and awareness group work program aimed at Deaf children aged seven and over. This resource supports the personal safety skills training of Deaf children and is written as a complete program, but can be used flexibly as a resource to support specific areas of work.

The resource is designed for use by all professionals working with deaf children, including children with additional needs. It is primarily aimed at teaching and other school staff to use as part of the school curriculum, but will also be of interest to professionals undertaking therapeutic work, such as social workers, health workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and care and communication support workers.

More information about the SAFE Programme can be found online at [www.safedeafkids.org](http://www.safedeafkids.org).

Please contact us if you have Deaf clients who may benefit from this program by emailing [Deafness\\_MHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Deafness_MHS@health.qld.gov.au) or phoning 07 3167 8430.

## Farewell Fiona Davidson

Nurse researcher and valued colleague and friend, Fiona Davidson, has left the Deafness and Mental Health Team to pursue PhD studies and to continue her work in forensic mental health.

Although Fiona will be greatly missed by the team, we are positive that wherever Fiona goes she will contribute her characteristic intelligence, kindness and passion.

## Contact the team by Skype

The Deafness and Mental Health team can now be contacted using Skype. This means Deaf people who use Auslan can now contact the team directly using Auslan.

Traditionally Deaf people who use Auslan to communicate have had to rely on English text based methods such as email, SMS and TTY to communicate. However Skype allows for video-based communication, making communicating in Auslan possible.

This is an important step in providing equitable access to this traditionally under-served community.

The team's Skype names are:

- Dianne Briffa – **di.dmhs**
- Rebecca Reedman – **bec.dmhs**
- Jennifer D'Ath – **jennifer.dmhs**
- Mark Cave – **mark.dmhs**

Please note that all members of the team work part-time. Staff availability will be visible once logged into Skype.

## Community education

The Deafness and Mental Health team work with community groups and the non-government sector to provide education sessions about mental health and wellbeing for Deaf and hearing impaired community groups.

If your community group is interested in accessing education about mental health and wellbeing, please contact the Deafness and Mental Health Service.

## Auslan Art Group

The Auslan Art Group was able to have their art work published in a catalogue and showcased by a professional art curator at a private function. This was an exciting opportunity to generate an awareness of deafness and mental health.



'Autumn', 2013

Pieces of art work in the collection were created by adults who attend the Auslan Art Group.

Auslan means Australian Sign language, and is a recognised formal language. Those with hearing who attend the group, are encouraged to 'have a go' at communicating in sign.

'Recovery' is a unique experience however many people describe the importance of feeling valued and of *contributing* as an active member of a community.

The Auslan Art Group meets on a weekly basis and helps to support people in their recovery by offering a safe and validating environment.

Staff and consumers are currently working on a participant information booklet which will be used as a guide and resource for those that attend the group.

## New resources now online

The Deafness and Mental Health Service has developed two new easy-to-understand booklets since the last newsletter.

These are about 'Medications Safety' and 'Relationships'.



These can be found on our website:  
[www.health.qld.gov.au/metrosouthmentalhealth/deafness/default.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/metrosouthmentalhealth/deafness/default.asp).